







INFERIOR POLITICS:

OR,

CONSIDERATIONS

On the Wretchedness and Profligacy of the Poor, especially in London and its Vicinity:—On the Defects in the present System of Parochial and Penal Laws:—On the consequent Increase of Robbery and other Crimes:—And on the Means of Redressing these public Grievances.

Adspicè late
Florentes quondam luxus quas verterit urbes!
Quippe nec ira deùm tantum, nec tela, nec hostes,
Quantum sola nocet, animis illapfa, voluptas.

Sil. Ital. XV. 92-95.

Non minùs principi turpia sunt multa supplicia quàm
medico multa funera. Sen. de clem. l. i. c. 24.

With an A P P E N D I X,

CONTAINING

A PLAN FOR THE REDUCTION OF THE
NATIONAL DEBT.

THE SECOND EDITION.

To which is added,

A COMPARATIVE VIEW of Mr.
GILBERT'S BILL and the PLANS
proposed in THIS WORK:

Shewing the exact Resemblance between them, as far as
the Bill extends, and pointing out farther Regulations
necessary to be adopted.

By HEWLING LUSON, of the Navy-Office.

L O N D O N:

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A
COMPARATIVE VIEW
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EVERY true friend to his country, and to humanity, must rejoice at the prospect, which the " Heads of the Bill," submitted by Mr. Gilbert to the consideration of parliament, open to his view ; and it is with peculiar satisfaction that the writer of the foregoing sheets observes the striking resemblance between the leading characters of this plan and the outlines he had ventured to sketch.

A

Briefly

Briefly to point out this similitude, and humbly to suggest to the public consideration such parts of his essay as do not appear to have been adverted to in this Bill, and which he conceives it might be expedient to adopt, as they manifestly coincide with the benevolent intentions of the respectable framer of the Bill, are the objects of the following observations.

To avoid tedious repetitions of what he has already written, or unnecessary quotations from Mr. Gilbert's Bill, he is obliged to refer the reader, occasionally, to both.

The Preamble to the Bill, after briefly mentioning " the grievances and the burthens" which the public sustains from the present state of the poor, whose various calamities, immoralities, impositions, and depredations, are treated of at large from the 37th to the 64th pages of the foregoing pamphlet, ascribes them to the same causes, viz. the inefficacy of the present system of poor-laws, and the mismanagements and embezzlements of the revenues intended by the legislature for the support of the poor.

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The Preamble then proposes the same remedy for these evils as I have done, in page 64 and 65, and equally inculcates the necessity of establishing “ one law of police which may prevent
 “ idleness, drunkenness, and vagrancy,”—“ be
 “ effectual to encourage labour and industry,”—
 “ to protect, support, and educate, the infant
 “ poor in principles of religion and morality,—
 “ to punish such of the poor as are idle, profligate,
 “ and abandoned, — and to support and
 “ cherish those who are really necessitous, infirm,
 “ and impotent.”

The necessity of adopting *every one* of these desirable and salutary regulations is so strongly insisted on, and the evils arising from the neglect of them are so minutely described, in various parts of the foregoing pamphlet, that I must, on this occasion, content myself with a *general* reference.

The mode of collecting and distributing the revenue for the maintenance of the poor;—the quantum of each parish-assessment to be determined by an average of former years; — reasonable salaries to be allowed to the collectors,

&c. See Bill, p. 11; and Inferior Politics, p. 64 and 65.

Having, as succinctly as possible, demonstrated the remarkable coincidence of the regulations proposed to be adopted in the Heads of Mr. Gilbert's Bill, and those recommended in my pamphlet, it remains to point out such *farther* reformatations as I have before recommended, and which, I humbly conceive, might, with propriety, constitute a part of a Bill, formed for the joint purposes "of relief" and employment of the poor, and for the "*improvement* of the police, of this country."*

DRUNKENNESS and PROFLIGACY of the POOR.

The reader is requested to compare what is said on these subjects in the foregoing pamphlet, from p. 102 to 113, with Mr. Gilbert's observations on them in the Preamble to the Bill, and to remark the *exact* resemblance between the plan proposed in his Bill and that in the 102d page of Inferior Politics, for the education, maintenance, and employment, of the

INFANT

* See title of Mr. Gilbert's Bill.

INFANT POOR.

The humane attention, which Mr. Gilbert has bestowed on "the protection, support, and education, of the Infant Poor," [see Preamble to the Bill, and p. 19, under the head of Sunday Schools,] is highly laudable; but it seems capable of being still farther extended. By the term "*Infant Poor*," I apprehend, Mr. Gilbert only means the children of such as *actually* become chargeable to some parish; but it has been observed, in various parts of the foregoing pamphlet, that there are *numbers* of children, not included in this description of Infant Poor, who have an equal, nay, perhaps a superior, claim on the public for "protection, support, and education." Such are all those children "deserted or ill-treated by their parents, *or deprived of them by the sentence of the laws*:" see p. 64, where I have proposed to allot a part of the *fund*, which, in Mr. Gilbert's Bill, is called "the casual and contingent fund," for that just and salutary purpose.

It is no less remarkable than true, that, in all public transactions, whether between diffe-

rent nations or the various parts which constitute one community, the obligations of justice and humanity are strongly enforced by the powerful motive of *interest*.— That this observation is peculiarly applicable to deserted, helpless, infants, and more especially to those whom the *laws* have deprived of their parents, I have endeavoured (and I hope not unsuccessfully) to prove. See *Inferior Politics*, p. 49 and 50, 91 to 93, and, more at large, from 103 to 112; where the objections, arising from this supposed restraint on liberty and increase of expence to the public, are considered and refuted. Indeed it is demonstrably evident, that the rapid and alarming increase of every vice, among the lower orders of the people, is, in a great measure, owing to the shameful neglect of the *Infant Poor*, and particularly of the offspring of convicts and beggars, who are not barely *deserted* by the public, (whose duty and interest it is to “protect, educate, and support,” them, till they can get their own living,) but suffered to be systematically trained up to the highest proficiency in villany, and thus maintained by the community in a manner the most expensive, impolitic, and disgraceful. The various classes of friendless Infant Poor *must* ultimately derive
their

their subsistence from the public : — the only question, therefore, is, whether they should be suffered to gain their livelihood by lawless rapine, or be instructed and assisted in doing it by honest industry ? or, in other words, whether their existence should be an injury or a benefit to society ? See p. 111.

VAGRANCY.

It is very pertinently remarked, by the judicious framer of the proposed Bill, That the Act of 43d Eliz. which is the foundation of the present system of Poor-Laws, “ was wisely
 “ framed, and well adapted to the circumstan-
 “ ces and situation of the country when it was
 “ passed ;”* and, so long as those poor, who were worthy of relief, were certain of obtaining it, the laws against *vagrants*, though severe, were just ; and they will be so again, if the salutary purposes intended by this Bill, which are,
 “ to punish such of the poor as are idle, profligate, and abandoned, and to support and
 “ cherish those who are really necessitous, infirm, and indigent,” can be effected.

But, in the present defective state of the Poor-Laws, the Vagrant-Act, in its *construction*,

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* See General Observations on the Bill, p. 32.

confounds calamity with guilt, making no distinction between idleness and impotence ; and, in its operation, vibrates between the opposite extremes of exemplary justice and oppressive tyranny.

Every beggar, says the law, is a vagrant, and every vagrant a criminal. This comprehensive sentence of condemnation falls alike “on the “just and the unjust;” and subjects the alien, the lame, the blind, the aged, nay, infants, lunatics, and idiots, to the same punishments as the idle, voluntary, guilty, vagrant. See *Inferior Politics*, p. 59.

“ The numerous tribe of *beggars*, distinguished by the common and opprobrious appellation of *vagrants*, may be divided into “ *two* classes, which, though in appearance “ they are nearly alike, differ widely in their “ real characters and intentions. The first class “ includes all those who solicit the contributions “ of the humane because they are *incapacitated* “ from earning their bread; the second comprehends all those who assume the mask of “ pretended infirmity and distress to conceal “ their idleness; and this is by far the most “ numerous. The former, who beg from necessity,

“ cessity, have an undoubted right to be main-
 “ tained at the public expence; the latter,
 “ who make begging their choice, should be
 “ compelled to abandon it: but, notwith-
 “ standing the impolicy of suffering *any* beg-
 “ gars is universally allowed, and the increase
 “ of their numbers in the metropolis is a ge-
 “ neral subject of complaint, it cannot be re-
 “ medied but by a reformation in our Parish-
 “ Laws, which by oppressing the necessitous,
 “ and encouraging the idle vagrant, augment
 “ the number of both classes.” See Inferior
 Politics, p. 44 to 59.

The rigorous execution of the Vagrant-Act,
 recommended in the Bill, p. 22, will undoubt-
 edly be equally politic and just, when a provi-
 sion shall be made for *all* but the idle, volun-
 tary, vagrant: but, might it not save much
 trouble, if, instead of “ being conveyed, from
 “ district to district, to the place where they
 “ were last settled,” the parish, in which they
 were apprehended, were empowered to demand,
 of that to which they belong, the charges of
 their apprehension and maintenance? or, would
 it not be adviseable to abolish *intirely* the
 troublesome and expensive practice of *removals*,
 either

either by this mode of payment (subject always to the controul of the district, or superior, committees) or by enacting that, from the time of passing the Act, or such determinate time as the wisdom of the legislature might appoint, all the *resident* poor in every parish shall belong to that parish, wherever their former settlement may have been? See *Inferior Politics*, p. 60 to 63.

BURGLARY, FELONY, &c. See Bill, p. 22.

Notwithstanding my unfeigned respect for the abilities and humanity of the respectable framer of the Bill, I cannot help expressing surprise and disappointment at not finding, under this head, or in any part of the Bill “for the *improvement* of the police,” the least mention of the various defects and absurdities in our *Penal Laws*, which stand no less in need of speedy and effectual reformation than our Poor-Laws.

Having, in the foregoing pamphlet, taken the most comprehensive view of this important subject that my limited abilities will allow, I shall content myself with barely mentioning a few of the most material alterations I have ventured

tured to suggest, referring the reader to the pamphlet itself, from p. 38 to 125, for farther information.

1st. That all persons, accused of crimes, (who are, by the law, deemed *innocent*,) should be kept in *separate* prisons, and receive different treatment from those actually convicted, even where the crime, if proved, should not, by the *present* system of penal laws, be deemed capital.

2d. That all persons acquitted should have a *testimonial* of their acquittal, (and of their character, if deserving of it;) that they should be *indemnified* for their loss of time, and any other injury themselves or families may have sustained by their confinement; and that, “from the moment a man, who supports himself and family by labour, is apprehended, on a criminal accusation, to the time of his acquittal, his family, bereaved of their proper and natural protector, should be maintained at the public expence.” See p. 75 to 79. This is a duty the public is undoubtedly bound, by the immutable obligations of justice, to perform. See p. 73 to 80.

3d. That the evidence of an accomplice, by his own confession not less guilty, and probably much more so, — sometimes perhaps an *instigator* of the crime, — ought to have very little influence in the conviction of a prisoner ; and “ that the indemnity which the law holds forth “ to accomplices endangers the lives of innocent “ men ; and the *reward* given them not only “ encourages but creates criminals, and is one “ great cause of the alarming increase of robberies.” P. 87 to 91.

4th. That the frequency and number of our public executions totally destroy their *monitory* effect on the people ; that the *indiscriminate* application of capital punishment to crimes totally different is equally impolitic and unjust ; and that, to circumscribe its operation, and, in particular instances, to *increase* its severity, is the surest means to heighten its effect: p. 117.

5th. That confinement and labour might be adopted in lieu of capital punishments in many cases ; and that *distinct* penitentiary-houses, differing in the term of their confinement and in the kind and degree of labour, and admitting
of

of certain degrees of relaxation or coercion, dependent on the behaviour of the culprits, would probably be attended with the most salutary effects. See p. 115 to 123.

Experience has proved, that the confinement of a number of criminals together, on-board the ballast-lighters, and stationing them so near the metropolis, has greatly increased the evils it was intended to restrain.

The transportation of criminals to Botany-Bay is, on many accounts, preferable to their confinement in the ballast-lighters at Woolwich: as a *temporary*, it is undoubtedly a happy, expedient, to empty our jails and rid the nation of an insufferable nuisance.

But, though capital punishments destroy, and transportation exterminates, offenders, they are so far from eradicating, that it is evident they rather tend to multiply, offences.

Capital punishments, even during their immediate execution, have no monitory effect, and the community sustains a certain loss by this impolitic amputation of its members,
which,

which, probably, might not only be preserved, but rendered highly useful.

Penitentiary-houses, instituted on the plan I recommended in the foregoing pamphlet, would, at once, answer the desirable purposes of punishment, admonition, and reformation; and would operate, with powerful and unremitting energy, on those great springs of action, — the sensations, the hopes, and the fears, of the human mind.

It might, at least, be expedient to make the attempt, since its consequences could not possibly be more prejudicial than those we experience from the operation of the present system of penal laws, which is now universally reprobated.

It is therefore to be hoped, that, as Mr. Gilbert's Bill is *avowedly* intended "*for the improvement of the police of this country,*" as well as "*for the better relief and employment of the poor,*" he will, in the Appendix, which he says will be prepared hereafter, (see note 3, p. 27,) advert to the reformation of the penal laws, which is a subject in every respect worthy his humanity, his abilities, and his patriotism.

T H E E N D.





